

INDIANAPOLIS MAYOR'S OFFICE FOURTH YEAR CHARTER REVIEW

INDIANA MATH AND SCIENCE ACADEMY NORTH

December 02, 03, 2013

The Indianapolis Mayor's Office Fourth Year Charter Review (FYCR) is designed to assess the extent to which a school is meeting the standards for renewal at the mid-point of its charter term. The FYCR Protocol is based on the *Performance Framework*, which is used to determine a school's success relative to a common set of indicators, as well as to school-based goals.

Consistent with the Indianapolis Mayor's Office Performance Framework, the following core question and sub-questions are examined to determine a school's success:

1. *Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?*

- 4.1. *Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?*
- 4.2. *Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?*
- 4.3. *For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support and preparation for post-secondary options?*
- 4.4. *Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?*
- 4.5. *Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?*
- 4.6. *Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?*
- 4.7. *Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?*
- 4.8. *Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?*
- 4.9. *Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with special needs?*
- 4.10. *Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with limited English proficiency?*

COMPLETION OF THE FOURTH YEAR CHARTER REVIEW

In compliance with the Mayor's Office Accountability framework, IMSA North engaged School Organizational Solutions (SOS), LLC to conduct the site visit in their fourth year of operation. The purpose of this fourth year site visit is to present the school and the Mayor's Office a professional judgment on conditions and practices at the school, which are best provided through an external perspective.

The Fourth Year Charter Review of IMSA North was conducted by School Organizational Solutions, LLC, team members:

Dr. Terrence Harewood

Margie Labelle

Cheryl McLaughlin

Dr. Sarah Ohmer

Dr. Harewood and Cheryl McLaughlin conducted a full day of classroom observations prior to the two-day site visit. Margie Labelle, Special Education Director, spent a full day prior to the site visit, reviewing special education files.

On December 02 and December 03, 2013, the site team was on site at IMSA North to review evidence and interview focus groups comprised of teachers, students, staff, board members, school leaders, and parents.

The FYCR site visit uses multiple sources of evidence to understand the school's performance. Evidence collection begins before the visit with classroom observations, special education file reviews, a meeting with school leadership, and continues on-site through additional document review, classroom visits and interviews with multiple stakeholders. Findings provided by the site visit team can be used to celebrate what the school is doing well and prioritize its areas for improvement in preparation for renewal.

Protocol: ***Core Question 4 and all of its sub-questions (4.1-4.10).***

Responses to Core Question 1 and all of its sub-questions, Core Question 2 and all of its sub-questions, and Core Question 3 and all of its sub-questions, will be completed by the Mayor's Office.

The outcome of the FYCR will provide the school with a written report that includes a judgment and supporting evidence on various aspects of the school, based on a rubric of indicators¹ developed for each of the four core questions and sub-questions in the *Performance Framework*. The assessment system utilizes the following judgments:

Does not meet standard

Approaching standard

Meets standard

Exceeds standard

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

INDIANA MATH AND SCIENCE ACADEMY NORTH

<i>Core Question 4: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?</i>	<i>FINDING</i>
<i>4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.3. For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support and preparation for post-secondary options?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?</i>	Exceeds standard
<i>4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?</i>	Meets standard
<i>4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?</i>	Exceeds standard
<i>4.9 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with special needs?</i>	Approaching standard
<i>4.10 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with limited English proficiency?</i>	Approaching standard

FINDINGS, INDICATORS AND EVIDENCE

INDIANA MATH AND SCIENCE ACADEMY NORTH

Core Question 4: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?

4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum does not align with the state standards; b) the school does not conduct systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school does not regularly review scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) the sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas does not focus on core (prioritized) learning objectives; e) the staff lacks understanding and/or consensus as to how the curriculum documents and related program materials are used to effectively deliver instruction; f) there is a lack of programs and materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum does not align with the state standards; b) the school does not conduct systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school does not regularly review scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) the sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas does not focus on core (prioritized) learning objectives; e) the staff lacks understanding and/or consensus as to how the curriculum documents and related program materials are used to effectively deliver instruction; f) there is a lack of programs and materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively.
Meets standard	The school: a) curriculum aligns with the state standards; b) conducts systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school regularly reviews scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) has a sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas that is prioritized and focuses on the core learning objectives; e) the staff understands and uniformly uses curriculum documents and related program materials to effectively deliver instruction; f) programs and materials are available to deliver the curriculum effectively.

MEETS STANDARD

To evaluate this standard, the site team relied upon a variety of data sources including: curricular documents (unit and lesson plans), review of the school's data management system, and curriculum mapping program (ATLAS), classroom observations and focus group interviews with multiple stakeholders. The site team saw evidence of a well-articulated curriculum framework. IMSA North undergoes a rigorous process to ensure that the enacted curriculum meets or exceeds Indiana State Standards and that teachers have resources to implement the curriculum on a consistent basis. The IMSA North Curriculum is computerized and housed online via the ATLAS Curriculum Mapping Software by Rubicon International. Concepts Schools, Inc., the parent Charter Management Organization (CMO) for IMSA North, employs district coordinators who are responsible for developing curriculum maps, pacing guides, and sample lesson plans for each grade and content area. Information provided by the school indicate that the unit plans housed in ATLAS, "are menus, not meant to be taught in their entirety, but include the essential elements" teachers need to customize lessons based on their students' academic needs. Teachers have access to these resources as starting unit guides for their lesson planning. The site team saw evidence and teachers reported that they have the autonomy to adapt their lessons based on the

academic needs of their students. Teachers are required to upload their own lesson plans including information on how they will assess each standard. Teachers, the school leader, and the instructional coordinator report that the curriculum is tied to Indiana State and Common Core Standards.

The school has a fluid and ongoing process for curriculum review to identify gaps based on student performance. While most of the formal curriculum is generated at the national organizational level (Concepts Schools, Inc.), grade level teachers meet regularly—weekly and quarterly—with the school leadership team including the instructional coordinator to discuss curriculum based on student data. The content of the meeting include examining deficits and gaps in the curriculum. Teachers and the school leadership also report that they regularly communicate needed curriculum adjustments, which are communicated back to the national organization via the regional coordinator.

IMSA North curriculum also aligns with state standards. As part of the FYCR site review process, SOS, LLC conducted a full day of formal classroom observations prior to the site visit, as well as walkthroughs during the visit. The site team noted a majority (26 of 28) of classrooms posted State Standards or I can statements that were linked to either Indiana state or common core standards. Teachers and the school leadership also reported that curriculum is based on the Common Core Standards, especially in the lower grades. The instructional coordinator and the teachers report that teachers track how often standards are taught and document that information daily. The instructional coordinator and the school leadership review the information on teaching of standards and assessments results. Information is then used to develop targeted interventions for individuals and subgroups.

IMSA North espouses a STEM focus in its mission. Teachers report they are connected to the Indiana Math and Science community through DOE Learning Connections, which provides resources for STEM curriculum.

Recommendations for Next Steps:

- One noteworthy area of concern expressed by students related to a shortage of textbooks. Students reported that they would like to take textbooks home, but are unable to because of a shortage. The school should ensure that all students have the resources they need to improve their academic performance.

In summary, based on overwhelming evidence of the existence and delivery of a high quality, standards-based curriculum, and a rigorous process to ensure review, and implementation, the site team noted that IMSA North meets this standard.

4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum is not implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is not focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery lacks the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities lack variety and/or limited use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) staff do not receive feedback on instructional practices.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum is not implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is not focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery lacks the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities lack variety and/or limited use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) staff do not receive feedback on instructional practices.

Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) the curriculum is implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery possesses the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities possess variety and/or use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) supplies sufficient feedback to staff on instructional practices.
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MEETS STANDARD

According to the IMSA website, the mission of the school is to, “To prepare our students for college by creating an effective learning community of higher standards and expectations with a rigorous curriculum focusing on science, math, and technology.” Moreover, as it relates to the core value of IMSA, the school’s website notes the following:

- 1-We will assign students purposeful and challenging work aligned with state standards,
- 2-We will utilize teaching methods that address multiple learning styles,
- 3-We will collaborate in developing and implementing meaningful instructional strategies,
- 4-We will model self-discipline, self-motivation, and commitment to high quality work,

Data stemming primarily from the classroom observations indicate that, pedagogies at IMSA North were found to be consistent with the school’s mission. Site team members observed lessons that were implemented according to their design. Classroom observations and teacher interviews demonstrate that instruction is focused on state standards and Common Core standards. The site team saw standards posted in 93% (26 of 28) classrooms. Teachers described the Common Core as essential to the primary learning objectives. Unit, lesson plans, and pacing guides are housed online in the Atlas Curriculum Mapping software which teachers access and use as the basis of their curriculum. Daily agendas were posted in the majority of the classrooms. The site team observed alignment between what was posted and what was being taught in the classroom.

While the pace and content of instruction at IMSA North was found to be adequate, the site team pondered whether the lessons possessed adequate levels of rigor and challenge. Since the school’s mission highlights a rigorous curriculum as one of its essential tenets, the site team deliberated heavily on whether the evidence met this threshold. A challenge for the site team stemmed from the fact that this indicator highlights both pacing and rigor which posed a particular challenge in determining how to best assess this standard. In the end, the site team found a preponderance of evidence to support its judgment. Challenging content through teacher questions and student responses were observed in 15 of 28, or 54 % of classrooms. For example, Kindergarten students were observed analyzing each other’s names to identify multiple sight words. Transitions between classrooms and/or activities were frequent, but in the majority of instances, they proceeded quickly and with minimal interruption of instructional time. Many classrooms displayed critical vocabulary that was connected to the lessons. Learning objectives were also posted in most (86%) of classes. Furthermore, in all classrooms, lessons were built on students’ prior knowledge.

During the focus group interviews, parents and teachers reported there are high expectations for all learners at IMSA North. Students also described the work as challenging, especially when asked to compare it to their previous schools. Site team members observed a variety of instructional strategies being utilized, including role playing, hands-on-learning projects, chants, etc. demonstrating some differentiation to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities, and learning styles. Students were engaged in independent practice in many classes, often receiving individual assistance from teachers. While the site team also observed whole group instruction in the vast majority of classes, all students were engaged in the same direct instruction and classroom discussion of concepts.

In summary, while the preponderance of evidence supports a meets standard, the site team offers the following feed-forward to help the school move from, “good to great.”

Recommendations for Next Steps:

- Direct, whole group instruction was observed in the majority of the classrooms. Teachers may need support or PD in utilizing more creative and engaging learning activities and strategies to provide variety for all kinds of learners.
- Most of the learning activities observed were at the understanding or knowledge level of Bloom’s Taxonomy. Teachers should consider cultivating lessons that better promote higher order thinking skills, such as analyzing, evaluating and creating along Bloom’s taxonomy.

4.3. For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support preparation for post-secondary options?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the school’s academic program lacks challenging coursework (e.g., Advanced Placement courses, internships, independent study) to prepare students for rigorous post-secondary opportunities; b) lack of high expectations to motivate and prepare students for post-secondary academic opportunities; c) insufficient material resources and personnel guidance available to inform students of post-secondary options; d) limited opportunities for extracurricular engagement and activities (e.g., athletics, academic clubs, vocational) to increase post-secondary options; e) the school does not meet Indiana Core 40 graduation standard requirements.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the school’s academic program lacks challenging coursework (e.g., Advanced Placement courses, internships, independent study) to prepare students for rigorous post-secondary opportunities; b) lack of high expectations to motivate and prepare students for post-secondary academic opportunities; c) insufficient material resources and personnel guidance available to inform students of post-secondary options; d) limited opportunities for extracurricular engagement and activities (e.g., athletics, academic clubs, vocational) to increase post-secondary options; e) the school does not meet Indiana Core 40 graduation standard requirements.
Meets standard	The school: a) has challenging coursework (e.g., Advanced Placement courses, internships, independent study) to prepare students for rigorous post-secondary opportunities; b) has high expectations to motivate and prepare students for post-secondary academic opportunities; c) has sufficient material resources and personnel guidance available to inform students of post-secondary options; d) presents opportunities for extracurricular engagement and activities (e.g., athletics, academic clubs, vocational) to increase post-secondary options; e) meets or exceeds Indiana Core 40 graduation standard requirements.

MEETS STANDARD

Indiana Math and Science Academy North opened its doors during the fall semester of 2010 serving students in grades K-7. Since then, the school has added a grade each year and in the fall of 2012 enrolled

its first freshman high school class. At the time of the site visit, the school was in its second year of serving high school students. Because the high school portion of the school is relatively new, the school could not provide substantial evidence of guidance and support for students regarding preparing students for post-secondary options. To effectively judge this standard, the site team scrutinized and relied upon evidence indicating (1) a systematic process is in place to guide and support students, and (2) a clear pattern of activities indicating a high level of implementation amongst the current freshman and sophomore classes.

With regards to the latter point, the site team found evidence of a rigorous curriculum in place to prepare students for postsecondary options. The Atlas Curriculum Mapping program identifies the academic program for high school students. The curriculum, as reviewed by the site team, meets or exceeds the standard Indiana Core 40 requirements.

All stakeholders, especially the students, clearly communicated that the school has high expectations to prepare them for college. For example, when asked what is the mission of the school, 100% of the students noted that the school's primary objective is to "prepare us for college." The site team also saw evidence that supports students being exposed to post secondary options through college visits and college fairs. For example, during the 2012-2013 school year, IMSA took students on tours of local colleges, including IUPUI and Butler, to name a few. Students also reported attending local college fairs. The school's assistant director currently also serves as guidance counselor, and his duties include scrutinizing academic transcripts and ensuring that students are on-track to meet at minimum Indiana Core 40 graduation requirements. The site team also found significant evidence that middle school students have been receiving information and are exposed to opportunities to help them advance in high school and beyond. Currently, middle school students have the opportunity to earn up to six hours of high school credit, which frees them up to earn dual credit during high school. Parents of the middle school students also receive information about college including the opportunity for their children to register for the 21st Century Scholars program. This resulted in 13 IMSA North students being currently registered as 21st Century Scholars. The school also has extracurricular options in place for the secondary students including a robotics club, a basketball club, and other clubs appealing to secondary students. For students who meet rigorous standards of academics and behavior, the school has an Ivy League Mentoring Program (ILMP), which provides them access to an adult mentor and additional opportunities to help them excel in school and plan for post secondary options.

According to school leadership and the board president, the school is in the process of constructing a dedicated section of the building for the high school, which would provide the needy space for programs, labs, etc.

The site team also saw some evidence of a system in place to support and guide students. The Concept Schools, Inc. network currently employs college counselors who are charged with ensuring students have the necessary information regarding college options and requirements at the regional level. The leadership also provided a clear plan to employ an onsite college counselor beginning in the fall semester 2014, whose dedicated focus would be on preparing students for postsecondary options.

Recommendations for Next Steps:

- It should be noted that current high school students expressed—and the site team was concerned, about the lack of a dedicated guidance counselor position. In order to be consistent with the school's mission, this needs to be implemented ASAP and in accordance with the school's plan described and outlined during the site visit.

- Moreover, the school needs to pursue and clearly outline alternative pathways for non-college bound students.

In summary, because the high school classes are generally small at the time of the site visit, the site team concluded that the efforts to prepare students for post-secondary options were adequate and thus adjudged the school as meeting standard. However, continuous monitoring of this standard is recommended to ensure that the plans outlined during the visit are implemented according to design as the high school portion of this school grows in future years.

4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are not accurate or useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are not received by classroom teachers in a timely or useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments lack sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is limited frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are not used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are not accurate or useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are not received by classroom teachers in a timely or useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments lack sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is limited frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are not used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.
Meets standard	The school: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are accurate and useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are received by classroom teachers in a timely and useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments have sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is sufficient frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.

EXCEEDS STANDARD

IMSA North effectively uses learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction. The site team noted that this school is a model for data-driven, standards-based teaching. The school employs a battery of standardized and teacher or network generated assessments to inform instruction. Standardized and classroom assessments are accurate and useful measures of student learning. The wide range of assessments administered at the school provides IMSA staff with frequent and extensive information on student performance. As reported by the instructional coordinator, the teachers, and evidenced in document reviews, teachers are required to document the standards that they taught each week along with evidence of how each standard was assessed. The comprehensive data management system the school has in place allows the teacher and school leader to track the academic performance of each student, by each standard. All standards taught are assessed at multiple times including a pretest to determine students' prior knowledge. The site team saw evidence of an item analysis on a practice End of Course Assessment, which was designed to help prepare middle and high school students for the End of Course Assessment (ECA). Teachers and instructional coordinator report that such analyses are common across grade levels to pinpoint specific standards that may need review or re-teaching.

A wide variety of assessments are used to inform instructional decisions and to meet different students' needs, including: NWEA, ACUITY, ISTEP, Indiana Reading Assessment, DIBELS, IREAD, EOC (a customized version of the ECA) and other teacher-prepared and Concept generated assessments. Teachers and the school's leadership reported that students in different ability groups are assessed differently. The site team observed teacher-developed classroom assessments with differentiated strategies for meeting the same goals. Students are assessed frequently in order to maintain flexibility of grouping and meet the needs of students. Student mastery of high-level Indiana and Common Core standards is reported to families regularly using a standards-based report card, along with traditional report cards.

All IMSA North students take the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) twice per year and the RIT scores from the NWEA are used to differentiate ability groups and inform academic needs. The school leader explained that students in the elementary grades complete the ACUITY assessment three times per year. Teachers meet with the school leadership for four data meetings throughout the year where extensive focus is placed on students' academic achievement data from a variety of assessments including: NWEA, Acuity, and the interim assessments. Teachers report that they test weekly in core curriculum areas. The school provides extensive training for teachers to interpret and understand the various reports that are generated by the assessments.

Teachers review the assessments of student mastery on an ongoing basis and corresponding scores are used to adjust instruction and create additional differentiation of instruction. All teachers receive the results of standardized assessments in a timely fashion. NWEA and ACUITY tests are given via the computer and the results of the NWEA are immediately accessible. Teachers report that formative assessments are used to adjust instruction, re-teach particular content and arrange sub-groups of students who need additional help or enrichment. The Site Team saw extensive evidence of data walls in several classrooms during the classroom observations. The school provides opportunities for skills enhancement through Saturday school, or after school tutoring or extracurricular clubs.

The Instructional coordinator monitors assessment results regularly and scrutinizes the results in order to support teachers in developing lesson plans. The site team observed written and computerized documentation of individual student scores, used frequently by teachers and leadership.

In summary, the school uses standards and assessments extremely effectively to inform and improve instruction. This practice is integral to the school's overall educational process and is a model of data-driven instruction, and thus, justifies a judgment of exceeds standard.

4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) hiring processes are not organized to support the success of new staff members; b) inefficient or insufficient deployment of faculty and staff limits instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are not certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) does not relate to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD is not determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is not explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) hiring processes are not organized to support the success of new staff members; b) inefficient or insufficient deployment of faculty and staff limits instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are not certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) does not relate to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD is not determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is not explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.

Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) hiring processes are organized and used to support the success of new staff members; b) the school deploys sufficient number of faculty and staff to maximize instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) is related to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD opportunities are determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.
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MEETS STANDARD

The FYCR team concluded that IMSA North deployed its staff effectively and, generally speaking, had an adequate human resource system. The school utilized an extended school day and an extended school year to maximize instructional time and increase student- learning opportunities including Saturday School, after school tutoring, clubs, and the Ivy League Mentorship program, according to the school leader, teachers, and staff data.

Evidence reviewed by the site team supports that IMSA North utilizes a well-developed system for hiring and retaining staff. The school has a systematic process for recruiting, orienting, and retaining teachers. IMSA publishes all vacant positions on the IDOE site and the school leadership carefully scrutinizes all applications for fit within the IMSA model. A hiring committee, comprised of the instructional coach, assistant director, concept school directors, and other members of the school leadership team, evaluates and makes recommendations for hiring. Teachers are oriented to the school culture via a Teacher Institute during the summer as well as through ongoing professional development. Further evidence of the success of this approach may be gleaned from the fact that the school has retained a high number (12) of teachers or staff members from its first year. Furthermore, many of the teachers from the first year are now serving in leadership positions within the school. The school also provides substantial incentives to retain teachers including: funds for supplies, financial support for professional development, an annual performance bonus, and a reimbursement for additional education up to \$3000 per year. The school leader also estimated that they retained 70% of the teaching staff from the 2012-13 academic year.

There was a wide range of professional development opportunities available to address both teaching and learning. As reported by the school leader, the professional development calendar is driven by the school leadership's analysis of instructional needs at the school as identified from the data and conversations with the teachers. Site team saw evidence of a survey where teachers indicated their professional development priorities. The team also found evidence of recent PD in response to the expressed needs on the survey. In focus groups conducted during the FYCR site visit, teachers uniformly agreed that professional development opportunities were sufficient and met their training needs. All teachers reported feeling valued, appreciated, and "part of a collaborative team." Teachers also felt supported by a well-developed system for PD and expressed feeling ownership at having the ability to be a part of the decision-making process for PD.

A clear structure for teacher evaluation exists at the Indiana Math and Science Academy. The three-tier system includes, teacher's self-evaluation on the Teacher Professional Responsiveness Survey. Teachers also report there are frequent walkthroughs by the school leaders and that they receive formative feedback on their instructional and pedagogical practices. Finally, the school uses a rubric-based summative evaluation process to assess and evaluate teacher performance once a year. Teachers also meet with the school leadership for data meetings four times yearly where, in addition to receiving feedback, they are expected to report progress and establish goals pertaining to improving their students' academic

performance.

The site team saw evidence that all of the staff are certified and deployed in areas in which they are licensed to teach.

Recommendations for Next Steps:

- Evidence shows Special Ed caseload is very high for the current staffing level. The school should consider hiring educational support or specialized staff.
- Furthermore, there are no apparent social services to support students such as mental health counseling, social worker, etc. the school should consider researching community resources such as Gallahue, Cummins, or Midtown Mental Health to support its students.

In summary, the HR and professional development practices at IMSA North lead to a cohesive and supportive climate for staff. These practices justify a meets standard.

4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>both</u> of the following areas: a) significant disagreements exist among stakeholders about the school's mission; b) there is a lack of widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) significant disagreements exist among stakeholders about the school's mission; b) there is a lack of widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.
Meets standard	The school: a) has a mission that is shared by all stakeholders; b) has stakeholders possessing widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.

MEETS STANDARD

The mission of IMSA North is: "To prepare our students for college by creating an effective learning community of higher standards and expectations with a rigorous curriculum focusing on science, math, and technology."

All stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, and staff, were able to cite the mission's emphasis on high expectations. They also clearly understood that the mission was for IMSA North students to prepare for and to attend college. The site members heard repeatedly from all focus groups that the school had "high expectations. Many parents and students quoted, "We're on a quest to be the best" to exemplify the school's mission. All stakeholders were committed to, and supported the mission of the school.

While site team members did not observe many stakeholders mentioning the STEM portion of the mission, school leaders reported that Concept Schools, Inc., the parent company, has recently hired a Regional STEM director who is providing support and resources to the school and to the teachers to foster and promote the STEM presence in all classes.

In summary, the site team observed a preponderance of evidence that IMSA North has a mission that is shared by all stakeholders and that stakeholders have widespread knowledge of the school's mission and are committed to it. IMSA North meets this standard.

4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address them: a) The school does not have clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach does not possess high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are disrespectful and/or unsupportive and there are non-existing or unclear processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are unprofessional and/or unproductive.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address it: a) The school does not have clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach does not possess high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are disrespectful and/or unsupportive and there are non-existing or unclear processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are unprofessional and /or unproductive.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) the school has clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach possesses high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are respectful and supportive and faculty and students are clear about processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are professional and constructive.

MEETS STANDARD

ISMA North has a behavioral management system in place that is implemented widespread throughout the school. Site team members observed behavior expectations posted in a majority of the classrooms (86% of all classrooms). Classroom observations also confirmed that the majority of classroom management techniques focused on positive reinforcement of behaviors through the use of proactive strategies. Also, classroom observations showed that in 93% of the classrooms observed, student behavior was associated with the appropriate rewards and consequences. Furthermore, in 93% of the classrooms high behavioral expectations were implemented consistently.

In focus groups, teachers and students reported that a "leveled" system of classroom management was utilized as a school wide system at ISMA North, with consequences increasing with the number and/or severity of student infractions. Site team members evidenced this approach and policy in the school's student handbook. All stakeholders reported that the school has a clearly defined, positive, behavior management system and parents and students are able to define it during focus group interviews. Focus group participants also reported that the school successfully uses a peer support system for instructional and behavioral mentoring.

Site team members also observed safe and orderly classrooms managed with care and respect. Parent focus groups verbalized strong support for the school's structure and discipline "implemented in a caring environment". Many said they had left their home school because of a lack of structure and discipline, which they greatly appreciate at ISMA North.

All stakeholders praised the nurturing presence and the exemplary support of the school's two deans. Parents and students said the deans were always present, were constantly visible, and helped support positive interactions between students, and also among and between students and their parents.

Teachers, parents, and students all reported that the school climate provided an environment where they felt like part of a community or family.

All stakeholders reported that the school leadership was approachable, caring, and responsive to any and all concerns.

Teachers also described a newly implemented merit system where they could assign merits to any student in the school (not just the ones in their classrooms) by logging into a computer program and giving merits to any student observed exhibiting exemplary and/or caring behavior. Teachers and students in lower levels lauded this program but students in the upper grades thought this was implemented inconsistently and primarily focused on lower elementary students.

Recommendations for Next Steps:

- Students and the leadership expressed some concern about the inconsistent implementation of the behavior management system. School should focus on attaining consistency in all classrooms and with the new merit system also.
- Students described limited space in the hallways and expressed concern about the wide spread of ages accessing the same space at the same time. School should consider assigning "designated" hall space for similar ages or alternate passing periods according to age groups in order to maintain a safe and orderly climate.
- Students and parents expressed great appreciation for the opportunity for direct learning about another culture at IMSA North, but concern was expressed about the lack of mutual adaptation, i.e. teachers willingness to learn, accommodate, and adapt instruction, to students' culture and learning styles. The school should consider PD in culturally responsive teaching.

In summary, IMSA North was found to have clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior with high expectations for all students, in a caring, "family-like" environment, where school leadership is approachable, responsive, and supportive in solving any conflicts. The site team judged them as "meets" in this standard.

4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) there is a lack of active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) school communication is neither timely nor relevant to the parental concerns; c) student academic progress and achievement reports are not clearly reported and/or misunderstood; d) the school's communication methods are not well-designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., not communicating in parents' native languages, communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at inconvenient times for parents).
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) there is a lack of active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) school communication is neither timely nor relevant to the parental concerns; c) student academic progress and achievement reports are not clearly reported and/or misunderstood; d) the school's communication methods are not well-designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., not communicating in parents' native languages, communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at inconvenient times for parents).
Meets standard	The school: a) has active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) utilizes communications that are both timely and relevant to the parental concerns; c) communicates student academic progress and achievement in reports that are understood by parents; d) the school's communication methods are designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., communicating in parents' native languages, not communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at convenient times for parents).

EXCEEDS STANDARD

IMSA North has an effective system of communicating information, including information about students' academic progress, to stakeholders. All stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, and staff) praised the highly developed comprehensive communication strategies utilized at IMSA North. Parents, in particular, described the outreach efforts as a real strength of the school. Parents cited frequent use of texts, emails, phone calls, newsletters, formal and informal (daily) conferences, daily performance logs, etc. Parents expressed appreciation for online access to students' data and said that they could find everything online that they wanted to know: assignments, missing homework, grades, etc. They reported that teachers are honest, frank, and "talk to parents about everything." Parents also reported that the school educated parents about new initiatives at school through "Parent University" and seminars on information that is useful to parents, such as using technology and other educational programs at IMSA North.

All stakeholders verbalized strong appreciation for the ongoing home visits by top school leaders, teachers, and staff, and said they occur at the beginning of school, at Thanksgiving, and throughout the school year.

The site team saw evidence of a standards based report card. Parents in grades K-3 reported appreciated for daily academic and behavioral progress reports on their students.

Parents reported being involved in numerous ways at IMSA North. They participated in field trips, book fairs, PTO, trips to Turkey, and helped in the classroom. One parent reported that she was at school "every single day." All said they felt welcome "at any time."

Site team members evidenced a vast array of communication techniques being used at IMSA North and were especially impressed with the home visits lauded by many stakeholders. The comprehensive communication between the school and stakeholders not only meets but also exceeds expectations.

4.9. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to special-needs students?

Does not meet standard	The school is not fulfilling its legal obligations regarding proper maintenance of special needs students' files, and requires substantial improvement in order to achieve compliance such as the following: individualized education plans are up-to-date, student evaluations or re-evaluations have occurred within the appropriate timeframe, files contain the relevant required information, such as, file log sheet, parent consent form, documentation of case conference notification to parents and other conference participants and signatures of attendees at case conferences. A school does not meet the standard if any individual education plans have not been updated within the appropriate timeframe.
Approaching standard	The school is not yet completely fulfilling all of its legal obligations proper maintenance of special-needs students' files, and requires <i>some</i> (but not considerable) improvement to fully achieve conditions such as the following: individualized education plans are up-to-date, student evaluations or re-evaluations have occurred within the appropriate timeframe, files contain the relevant required information, such as, file log sheet, parent consent form, documentation of case conference notification to parents and other conference participants and signatures of attendees at case conferences
Meets standard	The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding special-needs students, as indicated by conditions such as the following: individualized education plans are up-to-date, student evaluations or re-evaluations have occurred within the appropriate timeframe, files contain the relevant required information, such as, file log sheet, parent consent form, documentation of case conference notification to parents and other conference participants and signatures of attendees at case conferences.

APPROACHING STANDARD

As noted previously, SOS, LLC. conducted a comprehensive review of special education files at IMSA North prior to the site visit. During the visit, site team members also interviewed parents of special education students and students who are currently receiving special education services. The judgment for this standard is based on this information.

The site team lauds the school for many of its practices that fully comply with state and federal mandates regarding providing services to students with special needs. For example, all students receiving special education services at IMSA North have a file with their IEP and other pertinent information that is kept in a secured location. A system is established that teachers must sign out the file if they want access to its information. The school participates in the use of the Indiana IEP electronic program. The site team also found evidence that annual case conferences are completed by the required date. Classroom teacher knowledge of the student instructional needs and required accommodations was made evident in the interview process.

Based on a comprehensive file review conducted by the SOS Special Education consultant, concerns surfaced which prevents the school from following best practices in some areas. Though there were indications of procedural data requirements being implemented, there was missing information in the student special education files.

In the focus group interview process there was conversation related to the lack of professional development on special education issues, and paperwork documenting special teacher training required by Article 7 for some disabilities, such as those with autism, was not included.

Caseload sizes for the special education teachers are high which makes it difficult to meet the student individualized instructional and support needs that were included in the Individual Education Plans.

IEPs also indicated that some daily services are being provided in the hallway due to a lack of adequate dedicated space for this service. This subjects the students who typically have concerns related to attention, for their services in a location that has ongoing distractions and noise related to classroom use during various transition periods.

Evaluations: Student evaluations contracted with a private agency and contain extensive student information on diagnostic achievements and instructional needs. However, they were missing classroom observation and school achievement data that is required to be completed by school members of the multidisciplinary evaluation team. Due to this missing evaluation data, there was seldom a team member, who actually participated in the evaluation at the following case conference, as required by Article 7. Parent consents for the evaluation and RTI data was missing from the files.

Case conferences: Notice of case conferences with parent signatures of adequate notice was missing from a large number of files. Move in case conferences at the beginning of the school year did not occur within the legal time frame (10 days) for the majority of the cases. Multiple team members were invited to the case conferences but there was not sign-off to indicate who actually attended. Required student attendance at transition conferences did not consistently occur.

Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs)/Behavior Improvement Plans (BIPs): Behavior was documented as a concern in IEPs, but there were no FBAs or BIPs included in the files. There was no systemic behavior collection data evident in the files.

In summary, while the school does have a system in place to document services to students special needs, important and crucial elements were missing or not documented sufficiently. These omissions could potentially be problematic for the school in the event of a lawsuit. Hence, the site team adjudges the school as approaching the standard.

Recommendations for Next Steps:

- IMSA has done a fantastic job in connecting the parents of their special needs parents, but the population of the students with special education is steadily growing. It only takes one dissatisfied parent to increase the need for urgency for flawless paperwork that defines the specific legal program for these students. Since the special education accepted rule, "if it is not on paper, it didn't happen," guides many legal rulings, it is a perfect time to make sure that all programs, parent notifications and parent agreements are well defined on paper.

4.10. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related To access and services to English as a Second Language (ESL) students?	
Does not meet standard	The school is not fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires substantial improvement in order to achieve conditions such as the following: appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.
Approaching standard	The school is not yet completely fulfilling all of its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires <i>some</i> (but not considerable) improvement to fully achieve conditions such as the following: appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.
Meets standard	The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ESL students, as indicated by conditions such as the following: appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.

APPROACHING STANDARD

The school has a low number of ESL students (9). This factor was carefully considered in making this judgment. Most of these students are children of teachers and administrators at the school and are proficient in English. Las Links hand assessments had been conducted on some of the students, though not all of the eligible students had participated in this assessment process. While the IMSA network has a system in place to meet the needs and legal requirements of limited English proficiency students, the site

team had some major concerns about its implementation at IMSA North as it relates to the small number of ESL students who are currently enrolled at the school. Of major concern for the site team was the absence of Individual Language Plans (ILPs), which had not been completed on any of the ESL students. The school administrators were not aware of the regulations related to ESL assessments, ILPs or timelines. As the school grows in a city that is becoming increasingly diverse, this could become potentially more problematic. Hence, the site team adjudged the school as approaching this standard.

Recommendations for Next Steps:

- IMSA has outstanding data systems. Now would be the perfect time to develop a basic tracking system for students who enroll that fall under the requirements developed for ESL student who enroll. This system should include enrollment date, 10-day date, Las Links date, ILP date and language level score. This basic system will help you track the needs and legal requirement dates of these students.

APPENDIX A

FOURTH YEAR CHARTER REVIEW TEAM

The Fourth Year Charter Review site visit to the Indiana Math and Science Academy (IMSA) North was conducted on December 2nd and 3rd by a team of educators from SOS, LLC.

Name, Cheryl McLaughlin, Co-Managing Director, SOS, LLC.

Name, Terrence Harewood, Ph. D, Co-Managing Director, SOS, LLC.

Name, Sarah Ohmer, Ph. D, Assistant Professor, University of Indianapolis.

Name, Margie Labelle, M.S. Retired Director of Special Education